

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

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December 18, 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR

BRONSON TWEEDY *28 JES*

FROM:

A. W. Marshall *AWM*

SUBJECT:

Establishing Permanent Review Group

At lunch a few days ago, you suggested that we consider establishing a full-time group to review products rather than rely on the present team approach with which I am much dissatisfied. You recommended possibly tasking each agency to provide a senior analyst or manager nearing retirement for a year's assignment to [] PRG. These individuals would combine the virtue of wide experience with the attribute of being near enough to retirement to be relatively immune to influences presently deterring the intelligence community team members from objective evaluation of products.

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25X1 I appreciate that you and [] have tried to come up with a solution to the problems I raised in my last memorandum to you. However, this proposal concerns me. In my view, it might make our task even more difficult. First, I find it doubtful that the agencies would part with really valuable senior people; we could find ourselves with castoffs. Second, it is not just promotion and reward which affect a man's ability to criticize his agency. I think a man who has spent his life in a particular field, and is probably reassessing his contribution to life in general before retirement, would find perceptive criticism difficult to develop. Third, there is always the problem of people approaching retirement preferring to "coast," although this, of course, presumes we receive less than the top-rated people. Fourth, I don't like the idea of the people being assigned by the production agencies. They would have to be carefully selected to obtain people who show a willingness and aptitude for the task of critical review. Finally, the group of three does not seem sufficient to me. How do they get the necessary work done?

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NSC review(s) completed.

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I cannot suggest a perfect solution to the problem of getting people from the community to objectively appraise it. If we use teams recruited from production staffs, we compete with other demands on the members' time. Selecting a young member gives us inexperience; an older hand is less willing to critique products. If we have people who have worked on the products they review, we face the problem of reviewing oneself; if we select an outsider -- either in intelligence or outside the community -- we have problems of experience and knowledge. Any alternative poses tradeoffs.

However, I think by looking at the key problems we face some workable alternatives appear. The key problems at present are:

- Competition for team members' time against other daily demands.
- Team members who are too close to the products they review or who are not in an environment which encourages objective evaluation.

I do not feel lack of experience or knowledge of the community's operations is a bottleneck. These could be overcome by reasonably aggressive team members who are willing to talk with people, follow through on problems, and receive help and support from superiors.

The alternative ways to conduct reviews which appear to me to be workable are:

- Create a standing body (larger than three members), under the DCI, but responsive to the NSCIC, made up of young intelligence people drawn from different agencies. If assignment is temporary, perhaps it could be long enough for the person to earn his next promotion.

- Create temporary but full-time teams for each review made up of agency personnel drawn from sources such as training elements or new analysts.

A key to success, unless we bring in outsiders to staff reviews, is the incentive situation within the community with regard to product review. If there is full top-level support, if one can get ahead in one's career by doing a first-rate objective job of review and criticism, either of these schemes would work.

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These alternatives, of course, presume that the NSCIC desires to continue to conduct review efforts in the future as we have done in the past. What course we take depends on the events of the coming months; i.e., the coming on board of a new DCI and his approach to the entire issue of product quality. I do not think we should take any decisive steps now, but should actively discuss the various directions which the NSCIC review procedures could take in the coming year. We may wish to move away from product reviews and into studying specific problems that either the reviews or contacts with consumers have surfaced. We may want to turn our attention to issues of guidance and management. Our future approach should be tied in with any efforts by the PRG to establish an action program to solicit consumer reaction to specific products.

In closing, I want to note that the failure of these review efforts to aggressively develop objective evaluations of intelligence output are only in part a reflection on the team members who participated. In several cases the performance of certain members has been outstanding. The inability of the teams as a whole to produce reflects basic management weaknesses in the community.

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